

# Scope and Purpose

## International Conference

### “Reducing Alcohol Problems in the Baltic Sea Region Effective Approaches to Tackle Alcohol Related Problems in Local Communities”

**Riga, Latvia, 12-13 March 2007**

#### **Aim of the Conference**

The overall aim of the Conference is to inspire relevant administrations to develop effective alcohol strategies for the prevention of hazardous and harmful drinking and for the protection of third parties such as children and families. The conference aims at promoting the exchange of experience and knowledge on preventive alcohol strategies and on local or national projects whose methods have proven to be effective. Participants will be able to discuss the results of different methods used and bring home ideas for new projects or as an input for the development of own national strategies. One aim is to contribute to a closer cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region in this field, and to support the cooperation within the Partnership of Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS) and especially the expert group “Social Inclusion, Healty Lifestyles and Work Ability” (SIHLWA) under NDPHS.

#### **Background**

Alcohol is one of the most important health determinants in the Baltic Sea region, and one of the most important factors explaining the low life expectancy, especially among men, in the region. About 10 per cent of disease burden in Europe is due to alcohol. It is one of the leading risk factors for both disability and preventable death in Europe. The risk is more serious for men than for women in all age groups. Compared with EU-15, where average alcohol related mortality in 2000 was about 60/100 000, in the Baltic States it was about 3 times higher, in the range of 170 – 180/100 000. It is not an exaggeration to speak about a man made crisis situation, and alcohol flood.

Harmful alcohol consumption causes great suffering among third parties, in wrecking families and exposing children to enormous risks and vulnerability, and also in general exposing third parties to risks, such as violence etc. The economic loss due to lost working capacity and early death is very high.

National authorities are trying to find ways to reduce hazardous and harmful alcohol consumption. In some countries successful national alcohol strategies have been introduced, projects have been started and experiences have been gained of methods to reduce alcohol related harm. At European level the WHO Framework for alcohol policy in Europe was adopted in 2005. It forms an important basis for development of national policies. Furthermore, in the autumn of 2006 the EU Commission presented an EU Strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol related harm, and the EU Council adopted conclusions of the new alcohol strategy for the EU.

### **Contents of the Conference**

The Conference will work both in plenary and in workshops. The introductory plenary, including a Round Table will set the scene and form a framework for the discussions in the workshops. It will include an analysis of the situation and trends as regards consumption and its consequences. Under the heading "How to resolve the tension between the public health and trade interests in the alcohol field" an overview will be given of alcohol policies in general at national level and at WHO and EU levels. A Round Table will discuss the role of and available tools in local communities for effective prevention of hazardous and harmful use of alcohol. After that, in three parallel workshops participants will exchange experiences concerning effective strategies and methods to prevent and reduce hazardous and harmful alcohol consumption and to support children in families with alcohol problems:

- Strategies to reduce harm caused to children in families with alcohol problems
- Preventive strategies for identifying hazardous and harmful use of alcohol in the population, for early intervention
- Alcohol prevention in different societal settings

The workshops will also agree on important conclusions. The Conference will end by reports from the workshops and a discussion on what the participants find useful for bringing back home.

Further information on the Conference programme will be presented on the website of the CBSS ([www.cbss.org](http://www.cbss.org)), as well as on that of the Northern Dimension Partnership on Public Health and social Well-being ([www.ndphs.org](http://www.ndphs.org)).

### **Participation**

The Conference is aimed at decision makers and experts in public health and social sector administrations in Partner countries working with alcohol and drug prevention related issues. As alcohol problems need intersectoral collaboration representatives from different relevant sectors of society are encouraged to attend.

### **Request for contributions beforehand**

The conference is meant to give an opportunity for the relevant administrations to learn from each other about policies and practise that have proven to be effective for reducing alcohol related harm at local level. In addition, also ongoing, but not yet evaluated projects, which are considered to be interesting are relevant for this exchange of experiences. Therefore the organizers would very much appreciate active participation and generous sharing of experiences among participants. Participants are invited to send us as soon as possible information on projects, policies etc. This material will contribute to the final composition of the programme, and it will also be included in the report from the Conference. Participants will be asked, beforehand, to make their presentations during the workshops. Even if time will not permit presentation of all contributions at the Conference they will in all cases be published in a final report. Contributions – in English or Russian - should be sent to Kerstin Ödman.

### **Contact person**

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